



A Publication of the Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee and Idaho's Nongame Program

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The Idaho Watchable Wildlife Committee is comprised of the following agencies and organizations:

U.S. Bureau of Land Management
 U.S. Forest Service
 Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
 Idaho Audubon Council
 U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
 Idaho Department of Commerce
 Idaho Department of Transportation
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 Idaho Department of Fish and Game

Photos: Above: Great-Horned Owl, by Cory Class; Right: Great Grey Owl, by Terry Thomas

Our Amazing Owls

*Joel Sauder—Nongame Biologist in the Clearwater Region of IDFG
 the Great Gray Owl is his all time favorite bird.*

Something about owls fascinates us. From Winnie the Pooh to Harry Potter, owls fill children's literature with images of magic, mystery, and wisdom. Maybe it is the way they can fly without making a sound, or their strange "nightlife." Whatever it is, owls seem to pique our curiosity like no other group of birds.

Maybe it is this curiosity that has spawned the misconceptions that often surround owls. Contrary to some stories, owls *can* see during the day—they just have eyes that are highly adapted to seeing at night. If human eyes were sized proportionally to owls, our eyes would be the size of grapefruits. But owls still must have light to see. If they were put in a pitch-black, lightless room, they would be as blind as you or me.

Owls actually rely heavily on their sense of hearing as well as their sight to catch their prey. Those "horns" that are found on many owls species are not used for hearing at all. What they do use for hearing are facial discs that surround their eyes. These discs help focus sounds into their ears, like a funnel, and their ears themselves are not level on their head like ours. Having ears slightly out of alignment allows them to more precisely locate where sounds are coming from, making them more efficient hunters.

There are 14 species of regularly occurring owls in Idaho. For many people, the Great-Horned Owl is a common sight. Standing 22-inches tall with bright yellow eyes and distinct ear tufts, this owl is easy to recognize. Great-Horned Owls can commonly be seen just after sunset in many habitats from forest to prairie. Near cities, this species can often be seen perched on



The Great Gray Owl is the area's largest owl by length, with a wing span nearing five feet. Not only is it unusual because of its sheer size, but its activity pattern is strange for owls—it is active almost exclusively during the day.

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AMAZING OWLS CONTINUED

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telephone poles or fence posts looking for their favorite prey—small mice and voles.

Barn Owls, with their heart shaped faces, and little Western Screech Owls are common in parts of Idaho. Some owls with unusual characteristics call Idaho their home as well.

The Flammulated Owl ranks high on any unusual owl species list. Not only is it Idaho's smallest owl, reaching just over 6-inches in length and weighing around 2 ounces, but it is our only neotropical migrant owl. Bird species that migrate south to winter in Mexico and Central America are classified as neotropical migrants.

Flammulated Owls arrive in parts of Idaho in middle to late May, where they breed in ponderosa pine and dry Douglas fir forests. During early summer, their call, a simple slow toot-toot-toot, can often be heard. During September and October, they fly south for the winter.

The reason that they have this unique survival strategy is that they are almost entirely insectivorous, feeding on moths, grasshoppers, and other insects. They have to winter in the south because there is just not enough food to support them through the winter here in Idaho.

A second unusual owl species is the Great Gray Owl. This owl is our largest owl by length, with a wing span nearing five feet. Not only is it unusual because of its sheer size, but its activity pattern is strange for owls—it is active almost exclusively during the day.

Great Grays are only found in central and northern Idaho and can be seen hunting the edges of mountain meadows just after sunrise and just before sunset. One might assume that such a big bird must take big prey, but that is not the case. Great Grays are extraordinary mouse and vole catchers. They are reported to be able to see a mouse on the snow at 200 yards, hear one running in a snow tunnel 12 inches below the surface, and are tough enough

to crash through layers of crusted snow so hard that it could support a person.

So next time you are out and hear or see an owl, take the time to appreciate this unique group of birds that share our forests.



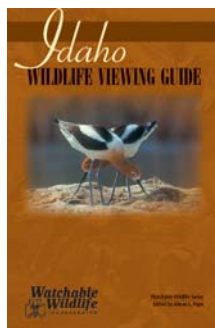
Burrowing Owl

© 2005 Tom Greer



Saw-whet Owl

© 2005 Terri Thomas



Idaho Wildlife Viewing Guide still available!

Each page adorned with color photos, maps and driving directions to 100 wildlife viewing sites! The guide can be purchased for \$11.95 at all Idaho Fish and Game offices or by calling (208) 334-3700.

A Historic Event in Wildlife Conservation

You are about to witness a historic event in wildlife conservation! Though it may not make the top story on the T.V. news, or a front page story in the newspapers, conservation organizations, agencies, and interested citizens are all awaiting the deadline of the Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies (CWCS) for each state in the country.

The submission of these state strategies to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may not seem like a very exciting or historic event at first glance. However, never before has there been a concentrated, orchestrated effort to *prevent* species decline and wildlife listing on the Endangered Species list!

We all know success stories associated with the Endangered Species Act. Take, for example, the gray wolf, the peregrine falcon, and the grizzly bear. It is the goal of Idaho's CWCS to succeed in protecting and monitoring species *before* they become threatened and endangered. This proactive effort is believed to be much more cost effective than trying to bring species back from the brink of extinction. In addition, the actions that will be taken to protect species and monitor habitat and population levels will have far reaching effects to *your* community in the form of clean water, clean air, wildlife watching, and recreation.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game, like all other state wildlife agencies will be submitting their Wildlife Strategies to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for approval by October 1, 2005. If approved, Idaho's strategy will provide access to federal money that Idaho *must match* and subsequently use to prevent wildlife in Idaho from becoming threatened or endangered.

After approval, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, along with hundreds of supportive organizations and thousands of citizens will face the task of gaining support for the strategy and the matching funds needed to make the CWCS a reality for Idaho's wildlife and people.

You can find out more about Idaho's CWCS by visiting the Idaho Department of Fish and Game website at <http://www.fishandgame.idaho.gov/>.

Butterfly Counts Take Flight in Idaho



Butterfly count volunteers—Salmon, ID

photo by Beth Waterbury

For 31 years, the North American Butterfly Association has conducted butterfly counts across the continent to gather important scientific information on butterfly populations and geographic distribution. Of the 467 counts held in 2004, only five occurred in Idaho, but three of those counts are distinguished by holding the “continental high” for Blue Coppers, Sooty Hairstreaks, Boisduval’s Blues, and Gillette’s Checkerspots.

During the summer of 2004, Clearwater Region Nongame Biologist Joel Sauder attended a training session on butterfly identification and monitoring, focusing on butterflies as

important indicators of the status of wildlife habitats. All it took was one day swinging nets and Joel was “lep” – an affectionate term for those who are nuts about Lepidoptera, the scientific order which includes butterflies and moths. In 2005, with the assistance of expert and veteran butterfly counter Kent Fothergill of Buhl, Idaho, Joel organized back-to-back counts in the Seven Devils and Gospel Hump Wilderness areas near Riggins in mid-July. Although the survey had to be adjusted for uncooperative weather and some of the areas at higher elevations were not sampled, 19 species and 327 individuals were identified during the count. But Joel is already excited for next year’s count, “Not only are butterfly counts a ton of fun but they provide us with useful information. Each species is directly tied to a specific host plant, so by monitoring which species are present and their populations over time you gain insight on the condition of habitat and what might be going on.”

Joel’s enthusiasm about his butterfly experience proved contagious to fellow Nongame Biologist Beth Waterbury in the Salmon Region. Beth scheduled a 2005 butterfly count near the City of Salmon on July 23, also with the assistance of Fothergill. Seven volunteers helped on the one day census, tallying 29 butterfly species. “It was one of the best hands-on learning experiences I’ve ever had – and it was outrageously fun,” remarked Waterbury.

She plans to continue the annual count in 2006 and beyond. “Butterfly viewing adds a whole new, exciting dimension to what we think of as Watchable Wildlife in Idaho.” For more information on butterfly counts and opportunities to participate in 2006 counts, visit the NABA website at <http://www.naba.org/>, and watch for future announcement in Windows to Wildlife.

Crater’s of the Moon Great Rift Science Symposium

The strangest 75 square miles on the North American Continent.—description of an early traveler.

The Great Rift Science Symposium will be a gathering of scientists, educators, regional community leaders, and the general public who share an interest in the unique landforms, biology, and history of the great lava desert of Southern Idaho. Most of the Great Rift area is now protected within the Craters of the Moon National Monument.

This four-day symposium will be held October 6-9, 2005 at Idaho State University, Pocatello, Idaho. The event will begin with two days of intermixed keynote speakers, concurrent scientific panels, plenary sessions, poster sessions, breakout meetings and evening cultural events. It will coincide with Idaho teacher in-service days so that educators can easily attend and gain academic credits. The two days of professional presentations will be followed by two days of field trips, including North Laidlaw Park, the Pioneer Mountains interface, Headquarters area, Pillar Butte, and the Wapi Flows.

Sessions that may be of special interest to wildlife enthusiasts include: juniper and sagebrush dependent species,



Mule deer at Craters of the Moon National Monument

photo by Dave Clarke

patterns of pocket gopher mound production, Burrowing Owls, arthropods, rattlesnakes, and Greater Sage-Grouse.

Visit www.georgewright.org/greatrift.html or call Emily Dekker-Fiala (902) 487-9722 for registration information.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN BLUES

Rocky Mountain Blues Benefits Idaho's State Bird

Mountain Bluebirds captured the attention of David Richmond after he moved from California in 1993. After reading about this unique species declining due to habitat loss related to logging practices and land use, he joined forces with the world renowned Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology and the North American Bluebird Society in working to provide artificial nestboxes for these magnificent birds. Naturalists from the Eastern U.S. and Canada had previously shown that Eastern Bluebirds, a closely related species, could benefit from human intervention when natural nest sites were not available.

Although many native Idahoans had admired Mountain Bluebirds and provided nestboxes over the years, there was no organized effort in Central Idaho to monitor or recover these birds. Along with a small number of nature-lovers, Richmond formed Rocky Mountain Blues and developed a registered bluebird trail in and around Challis, Idaho. Along this trail he and his helpers erected specially designed boxes at specific intervals in appropriate habitat to attract the "Blues".

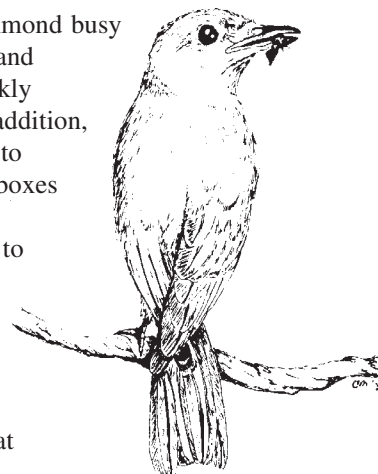
Since 1998 Rocky Mountain Blues has participated in "citizen science" studies conducted with ornithologists at the Cornell Bird Lab in an effort to better understand the life history needs of this species. "We're doing what we can to improve the chances of mountain bluebirds returning to Idaho for our great grandchildren," said Richmond.

Over the years, the number of nestboxes monitored by Rocky Mountain Blues has increased from 7 to 50, with

encouraging results. Nest productivity increased from a paltry 21 Mountain Bluebird eggs laid and six birds fledged in 1998 to 151 eggs laid and 87 young bluebirds fledged in 2005, despite cold and rainy spring weather that caused the abandonment of 33 bluebird nestlings. Great success has also been achieved with other cavity-nesting birds, including the Mountain Chickadee, a species vital to the health of conifer forests. Another "Blues" beneficiary is the Tree Swallow, a bird highly prized for its proclivity for eating mosquitoes and other flying insects, as well as for its beauty and acrobatic flight.

This activity keeps Richmond busy building and repairing boxes and monitoring his trail twice weekly during the nesting season. In addition, he has developed a technique to prevent bears from damaging boxes and consuming the contents.

For more information or to get involved, contact Dave Richmond at fowest@custertel.net. To learn how to construct a bluebird box of your own, contact Idaho Fish and Game at (208) 287-2750



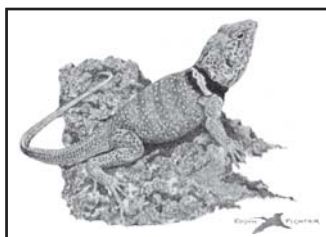
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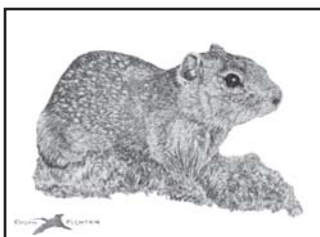
When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

—John Muir



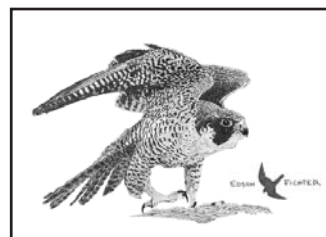
Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life.

—Rachel Carson



When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.

—Aldo Leopold



Nature has been for me... a source of solace, inspiration, adventure, and delight; a home, a teacher, a companion.

—Lorraine Anderson

Set of 4 cards (same design)	\$5.00
Set of 4 cards (variety pack)	\$5.00
Set of 8 cards (variety pack)	\$8.00

Notecards are available for purchase from: Idaho Department of Fish and Game, P.O. Box 25, 600 S. Walnut St., Boise, Idaho 83707 • 208-334-3700 and all Idaho Department of Fish and Game offices or e-mail sfocht@idfg.idaho.gov

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Thank You to All Contributors

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Fall Wildlife Events

MK Nature Center-Boise

Crime Scene Investigation: Wildlife

October 22—10:00AM-12:00PM-Open to: 5th-8th graders
Join us for an opportunity to conduct a wildlife crime scene investigation! \$10.

Creatures of the Night: Halloween at the MK Nature Center

October 29—7:00-9:00PM- For families with pre-k through elementary aged children. Wear your costume and learn all about bats, owls, and other nocturnal animals. Bring flashlight.

The Silent Secret of Snakes

December 4—1:30PM & 3:00PM-See live snakes and reptiles!
\$5 for adults and \$1 for kids under 12 Call 334-2225 for more information on MK Nature Center activities.

Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge

Fall Family Fun Nights

October 8—at 7pm—"The Great Northern Idaho Grizzly Bear"

October 16—at 1pm—"Firewise"

October 23—at 7pm—"Live Owls"

October 29—at 7pm—"Garden Song"

Contact the Refuge for more information at (208)267-3888

The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey-Boise

October 9—Free admission to

Visitor Center and family activities!

November 21—December 24-Holiday

Bazaar-Support the Peregrine Fund!

(208) 362-8687



Portneuf Valley Audubon Society

Oct 20—Rocks, Rails and Trails, by Paul Link

Oct 22—Waterfowl Watching, Springfield Ponds

Nov 17—Moose Courtship, by Terry Bowyer

Nov 19—Diving Ducks on the Snake River near American Falls

Dec 15—Exploring the Ice-Free Dry Valleys of Antarctica,
by Bob Wharton

(208) 282 - 3410

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

October 1—Deer Flat Litter Lift. Litter's not for critters, so help clear litter from the Lake Lowell sector of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. 467-9278 or deerflat@fws.gov

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Sarah Focht

Editor

Alyssa Jones

Designer

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